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College of Technology in Kokomo site of first NASA-Project Lead The Way teacher training

KOKOMO, Ind. - Purdue College of Technology at Kokomo is one of two sites around the country that will hold a weeklong NASA workshop on lunar exploration designed to give Project Lead The Way teachers new ideas for getting students engaged in math and science.

The inaugural NASA STEM Enhancement Project in Lunar Exploration will be offered July 13-19 at the Purdue College of Technology at Kokomo. It is a joint effort between Project Lead The Way and NASA to encourage students, especially in middle and high schools, to choose science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) majors in college.

Richard Grimsley, vice president for programs at Project Lead The Way, said the workshop was started in collaboration with the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center near Baltimore, which is funding the workshop and has offered similar training for teachers in the Maryland area for several years.

"NASA was aware of Project Lead The Way and approached us with the idea of expanding the lunar exploration workshop to reach teachers that are interested in teaching using a STEM-based, cross-disciplinary approach," he said. "In this workshop, teachers will learn innovative ideas to teach math, science and engineering subjects that they will be able to take back to the classroom."

NASA's planetary space exploration program is designed to locate frozen water and minerals that will support human life. If specific elements can be discovered through the exploration program, then it is believed that humans can inhabit other planets and solar systems.

During the seminar, teachers will learn how to create a lesson plan for students to design their

own mission plan to explore a lunar surface using STEM content knowledge. Teachers will learn how to map a planet's terrain and build and remotely control a robot equipped with sensors that can help find frozen water.

Grimsley said an important aspect of the workshop is that teachers are required to work in groups. Schools interested in participating are required to register a team composed of a Project Lead The Way trained teacher, a math teacher and a science teacher. Separate training is offered for middle and high school teachers.

"In K-12, teachers tend to teach in silos, and our goal with this workshop is to break down barriers and encourage teachers to work across disciplines," he said. "We've found that a curriculum comes alive when kids understand the connection between engineering, math and science. Learning math and science concepts is important, but showing students how to apply that knowledge is a great way to foster an early interest in STEM subjects."

Grimsley said the two locations where training will be held this summer – the College of Technology at Kokomo and the University of Texas at Tyler – were selected because of the large number of Project Lead The Way schools in those states.

Openings are still available for the Kokomo workshop. Registration for the workshop is $100 per person. Each school is responsible for the cost of transportation, rooms and meals. To register, contact Rene Bailey at the College of Technology at Kokomo at (765) 455-9571 or srbailey@purdue.edu .

Project Lead The Way is a national nonprofit organization that provides engineering and technology education curricula for teachers in middle and high schools. Purdue is the affiliate university for Project Lead The Way in the state. The university also is responsible for training the program's middle school and high school teachers for the engineering curriculum.

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